

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ANKARA 000561

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/28/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR SECRETARY RICE'S VISIT TO ANKARA

(U) Ambassador Eric Edelman, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: You arrive in Turkey as we begin to recalibrate bilateral relations emphasizing renewed dialogue on areas of mutual concern to maximize achievable cooperation. We are working with a different democratizing Turkey as elites rotate and under the impact of widespread, and disaffection with U.S. policy in Iraq and Turkey's absorption with EU accession negotiations. Our task is complicated by the sharpening difference between a government unwilling to reaffirm the value of the U.S.-Turkish relationship in consistent, bold, public terms and a General Staff (TGS) which is steadily, rationally, and publicly signaling a desire to make the relationship work. End summary.

MAIN ISSUES

2. (C) Iraq-related issues top your Turkish interlocutors' agenda. The U.S. intervention remains sharply unpopular as a result of instinctive Muslim/Sunni, solidarity or left-wing anti-American sentiment, depending on the segment of Turkish society; the Turkish media, government, and main opposition party have all contributed to heightening the negative view in Turkish public opinion. The Turks see the positive Jan. 30 Iraqi elections through the prism of Kurdish aspirations for independence and the belief that we are essentially handing over Kirkuk to the Kurds with negative implications for Iraqi and Turkish stability and interests. (While they supported the elections, their statements (pre- and post) were heavily tinted with the view that they won't like the outcome and an assertion that it will add to tension and violence.) Moreover, the high level of official and media-generated disinformation has nourished Turkish conspiracy theories over lack of U.S. action against the PKK in northern Iraq, perceived U.S. favoritism toward the Kurds (e.g., on Kirkuk) and toward the Shi'a, perceived discrimination against the Turkmen minority, and perceived U.S. coldness toward Iraqi Sunni Arabs. Bilateral relations were further poisoned by al-Jazeera style media distortion of the fall 2004 Fallujah operation and related anti-U.S. statements by PM Erdogan and FM Gul.

3. (C) Other issues on which your Turkish interlocutors will focus include Cyprus, where the Turks expect the U.S. and UK to take the lead in ending the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots and bringing the Greek Cypriots back to the bargaining table; and EU accession negotiations. The EU's December 17 decision to open the accession process with Turkey in October 2005 should spur continued internal reform, at least on paper, but implementation remains a chronic problem and Turkey faces a long, difficult path to membership.

ERDOGAN, AKP: UNASSAILABLE, OR OVERCONFIDENT?

4. (C) Despite resentment and suspicion of ruling AKP by a waning Kemalist elite, Erdogan still appears unassailable for the time being. He remains highly popular in the heartland owing to the widespread conviction that he is the tribune of the common man and because the common man says, "He looks like us." Erdogan has a two-thirds majority in parliament and faces no meaningful opposition from other parties, especially given main opposition CHP's wallowing in bitter infighting. Indeed, Turkey is functioning as a quasi-one party state, which is slowly bringing other problems to the fore.

5. (C) Unfortunately, Erdogan suffers from a lack of competent, worldly advisors and, given the lack of competition from opposition parties, we see a measurable drift in policy- and decision-making: he has found it impossible to choose a chief negotiator with the EU and he is unable to organize a Cabinet reshuffle. That has periodically been on his agenda for almost two years. His effective policy direction has come either from the EU (the Copenhagen Criteria) or from the IMF (standby agreements). Erdogan does not have effective control of either the entrenched State bureaucracy or his own party, owing in part to his continual absence from Ankara -- he has made approximately 75 foreign trips in two years and is otherwise traveling around Turkey. He has failed to forge effective working relations with either the Presidency or core

institutions of the State (armed forces, judiciary). And he faces a growing problem of corruption in AKP.

TURKEY'S PROBLEMATIC VIEW OF RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.

16. (C) Erdogan appears to accept the idea in principle that maintaining good relations with the U.S. is important. He and Gul have taken some verbal steps to reaffirm the relationship (mixed with damaging emotional outbursts), but Erdogan has no vision of how to re-energize and expand relations from Turkey's side. Gul has Islam-influenced views behind his seeming affability and Ahmet Davutoglu, the Islamist foreign policy adviser to both Gul and Erdogan, is inclined to distance Turkey from the U.S., in directions familiar from Erbakan's days in the Prime Ministry (1996-97). President Sezer is a narrow-minded statist with a tin ear for politics and little enthusiasm for good relations with the U.S. -- he maneuvered to prevent U.S. troop deployment through Turkey for OIF and has been effusive in his response to Putin. CHOD Ozkok is a solidly pro-Atlanticist senior commander. Deputy CHOD Basbug (apparently in line to become CHOD in 2008), whose repeated emphasis on the breadth, depth, and importance of relations with the U.S. was a highlight of his January 26 press conference, agrees, although he is somewhat more reserved. Ozkok has moved step-by-step to try to bring more modern thinkers into senior ranks, but left-nationalist sentiments are strong at lower ranks.

SECURITY RELATIONS

17. (C) The GOT says it shares our goals for a secure, stable, democratic Iraq, united and territorially whole, but your interlocutors continue to complain that we do not listen to their input or concerns. At the same time they have few concrete proposals for next steps beyond keeping the Iraqi Kurds in line or dealing with the PKK/Kongra-Gel. Nonetheless, Turkey has provided valuable assistance on Iraq. Ankara offered to send peacekeeping troops to Iraq in October 2003, approved the use of Incirlik Air Base for tankers to refuel aircraft on support missions for both Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), authorized the transit of U.S. troops from Iraq on rotation out, and permits the transit of supplies for our forces and humanitarian goods. The GOT says it reached out to all major Iraqi groups to encourage participation in the elections. Turkey is active in reconstruction efforts, including providing electricity for Iraq, and training in Turkey of Iraqi diplomats, Sunni political groups and, as its contribution to the NATO training mission, Iraqi security forces. Lower level officials have suggested Turkey could cut support, like the logistics transits to get our attention on Kirkuk or Kongra-Gel.

18. (C) U.S. military leaders worked hard to repair the damage caused by Turkey's failure to approve passage of the 4th ID in March 2003 and our arrest of Turkish Special Forces personnel in Suleymania in July of that year. Nonetheless, the security relationship remains fragile. Recent requests to increase our use of Incirlik AB (e.g., establish a logistics air hub, increase training deployments) have been delayed as Turkish officials remain concerned the hub proposal may be part of a larger U.S. request to move F-16s permanently to the base as part of the Defense Posture Review Initiative. Some Turks suspect we desire to use Incirlik AB to stage strikes on neighbors Iran or Syria. We are seeking confirmation of some local press speculation that the Turks may offer you Incirlik as a logistics air cargo hub in response to our long-standing request.

19. (C) The preoccupation with Iraq overshadows good bilateral cooperation in other aspects of the GWOT: since 9/11 and the November 2003 Istanbul attacks, our intelligence and law enforcement cooperation has improved, although greater Turkish attention to Al-Qai'da link support elements here would be beneficial. Our militaries coordinate assistance to Georgia and Azerbaijan, improving their abilities to protect important energy transportation routes. Turkey subscribes to every arms control arrangement it is eligible to join, including the Proliferation Security Initiative. Ankara has been supportive of international efforts to press Iran to meet its commitments to the IAEA, although strongly favoring persuasion over coercion, while Gul and Erdogan have stressed publicly good neighborliness and Iran's "credible" denials of nuclear activity. The Turkish military provides counterterrorism and other training to personnel from Partnership for Peace partner countries and soon to Allies as well. And Turkey will again assume the command of ISAF in Afghanistan in February for a six-month period during which they will significantly increase their contribution to this important NATO mission.

HUMAN RIGHTS

¶10. (U) Since 1991, Turkey has adopted eight wide-ranging packages of legal reforms and two sets of constitutional amendments aimed at meeting EU-related human rights standards. The legal reforms are designed to crack down on torture, loosen restrictions on speech and assembly, reduce the political influence of the military, and expand religious freedom. Implementation of the laws has been slow. Elements of the military, police, judiciary, and bureaucracy have criticized some of the reforms as threats to national security, and have resisted implementation. In some cases, bureaucratic offices have drafted highly restrictive implementing legislation. For example, Parliament lifted restrictions on Kurdish language broadcasting, but the subsequent Radio and Television Board regulation set strict time limits and restricted such broadcasts to state-owned media outlets.

¶11. (SBU) Turkey faces a long, difficult path to full EU membership. Many here do not recognize how wrenching the changes ahead will be. The EU has made it clear that it expects accession talks with Turkey will take at least 10 years, and a number of Turkish officials privately acknowledge the GOT will need that time to adopt the full EU acquis. Turkey is expected to face difficulty in a number of areas, including environmental standards, but the key is still likely to be Turkey and the EU's adoption of real religious freedom and tolerance.

REGIONAL ISSUES

¶12. (C) Under FM Gul's influence, Turkey has sought to improve relations with Iran and with Arab neighbors, including Syria, over the past year. PM Erdogan visited Iran in July 2004 and Syria in December. Gul visited Israel and Palestine in January 2005, a visit both Turkey and Israel portrayed as an end to Turkish-Israeli public tensions in 2004, and Erdogan says he will visit Israel soon. Abu Mazen is due in Turkey Feb. 1. Turkey still views itself as a potential mediator between Israel and the Palestinians, but has so far failed to produce any results. For now, bilateral economic relations and intel cooperation remain strong.

¶13. (C) The GOT is a working partner in the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENAI). Turkey is a co-sponsor, with Italy and Yemen, of the BMENAI's Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD). While Gul consistently says the right thing on the need for economic and political reform in the region, we need to press them to develop an active program to move the Democracy Dialogue forward. However, most of the Turkish public, and even many Turkish politicians and academics, believe BMENAI is a U.S. plan to control Middle East oil and convert Turkey into a moderate "Islamic state" as a "model" for the region.

¶14. (C) Turkey made a major policy shift on Cyprus to support the Annan Plan in spring 2004, but feels aggrieved because little has been done to ease the economic isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. Relations with Greece continue to warm, despite recent Greek complaints about Turkish air activity in the Aegean. Greece gave firm public support to Turkey's EU candidacy.

¶15. (C) Trade relations with Russia have ballooned in the past several years. Turkey is strongly dependent on Russian natural gas; during a December visit Putin reminded the Turks of their energy dependence on Russia and proffered a strategic partnership alternative to Turkey's ties with the U.S. and EU. PM Erdogan immediately followed up Putin's visit by visiting Moscow in January, again focusing on expanding energy and commercial ties; Putin again proffered a strategic alternative. Turkey has strong ties to Azerbaijan and backs Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. Turkey will not open its border with Armenia or restore diplomatic relations absent Armenian recognition of the border with Turkey and concessions on occupied Azerbaijani territories. The Turks publicly support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but have not been forceful vis-a-vis Russian designs in Georgia.

¶16. (C) Believing that the incidence of HIV/AIDS is low and is limited to sex workers and intravenous drug users, Turkish officials are complacent about the AIDS threat, arguing that Turkey's traditional family values make transmission to the general population unlikely. However, high HIV infection rates in neighboring countries (Russia, Ukraine and Romania) pose a serious threat to Turkey. Although the Global Fund has granted \$300,000 to Turkey for public education programs for high risk groups, the proposed creation of a regional information and best practices sharing network among Black Sea Economic Cooperation forum countries has not moved forward.

ECONOMY

17. (U) The Turkish economy has recovered strongly from the financial crisis of 2000-2001 and is growing at an annual pace of around 8-9 percent. However, the recovery remains vulnerable due to a large current account deficit (about 5 percent of GDP) and a large debt with a short maturity structure. Unemployment and poverty remain high, and ordinary people have not felt much benefit yet from the overall macroeconomic improvement. Turkey remains too reliant on Russian energy sources (a point the Russians are trying to use as leverage for political gain). Macroeconomic success has also bred a sense of complacency about the need to persist with difficult reforms, such as privatization, and reform of the banking, social security and tax systems. These reforms are being addressed in the new three-year standby program that the IMF and GOT have just agreed to.

18. (U) Due to historic economic/political volatility and opaque regulatory/judicial systems, Turkey has long received less foreign direct investment than other countries of similar size and potential. Many in the Turkish elite are convinced that there will be a flood of foreign investment in the wake of the EU's December decision to open accession negotiations with Turkey in October. However, this is unlikely to materialize unless more is done in the area of structural reform. In addition, there appears to be a lack of appreciation for the enormous challenges Turkey will shoulder in the accession negotiations, for the fact that EU accession will affect nearly aspect of their lives, and that it may in the end be quite costly for Turkey to comply with EU directives in environmental protection and other areas.

EDELMAN